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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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**Draper Reminds Pro-Israel Rally
God Promised Arabs Blessings Too**

By Norman Jameson

DALLAS (BP)—Southern Baptist Convention President Jimmy Draper appeared a reluctant groomsman at a marriage of religion and politics performed by fundamentalist, independent pastor John Hagee Aug. 28 at a "Night to Honor Israel" rally.

Hagee, pastor of the affluent, independent Church of Castle Hills in northwest San Antonio, presented Draper, as "one of America's foremost religious leaders" and presented a plaque recognizing Draper's Godly leadership in bringing together Jews and Christians in America.

Draper, however, disclaimed Hagee's intimation that Draper spoke for 13-million Southern Baptists, the nation's largest Protestant body, saying "I can only speak for myself."

Obviously conscious of Baptist-Jewish tensions the past two years Draper delicately picked his way through to a statement supporting Israel and reaffirming the Arab nations as nations blessed of God. "Although we have theological and political differences, Christians join Jews and people everywhere wanting peace for the world and especially for our friends in the Middle East," Draper said.

He recounted God's promise recorded in Genesis 17 to bless Ishmael from whom the Arab nations descended and said the Arab nations have become great as God promised. But God's covenant, said Draper, He made with Isaac and ultimately Israel. "As Bible believing Christians we need to recognize and reaffirm the right of Israel to exist with defined borders and in peace with a unified Jerusalem," Draper said to resounding applause.

But throughout Hagee's passionate rhetoric condemning everyone from CBS to "Russia's paid gangsters, the PLO," to that "jackel Arafat," Draper applauded only occasionally with the fervent crowd of 500 but never enthusiastically. At the end of Hagee's address, when the crowd rose to its feet, Draper remained conspicuously seated on stage.

Richard Fogel, chairman of the Anti-Defamation League's Dallas regional board, stayed seated on Draper's right. The other dozen stage personalities stood, including Gen. Moshe Gidron, consulate general of Israel at Houston.

Draper said his remaining seated was not consciously defiant and really had no meaning.

The rally was "much too hip hip hooray for political Israel," Draper said, explaining he was uncomfortable with the likely perception of his presence. "In some quarters my presence will be seen as supporting everything that happens in Israel."

In retrospect, Draper said he felt he would refuse any future request to participate in similar events but said once he realized the rally's political implications, "backing out at the last minute would have sent the wrong message to American Jews."

Hagee plans to take his rallies to all major cities in America. He has been to five Southwestern cities already and has plans for Phoenix, Ariz. this fall. He brought the choir and a full orchestra from his church and an usher estimated 200 people in the crowd had come the 275 miles from San Antonio to Dallas for the rally.

Baptist Teams, Paraguayans
Battle Flood's Devastation

ALBERDI, Paraguay (BP)--With water topping homes, businesses and almost every recognizable landmark, Southern Baptist missionaries, Paraguayan Baptists and employees from Baptist hospital, Asuncion, rowed through what used to be the main streets of Alberdi, offering food, medical and spiritual care.

Flood victims, many afraid to leave businesses and homes, lived in improvised plastic shelters on rooftops. More than three feet of water inundated the town and makeshift pumps strained to hold back the brown waters of the Paraguay River.

Six Baptist workers went to Acevedo Cue, an isolated high ground area where grass thatch shelters housed 300 people. They distributed food and medical supplies. "So far I've moved five times seeking refuge from the water," one Paraguayan told the Baptists.

Utility poles extending two and three feet above the water were the principal landmarks channeling canoe and boat traffic.

Paraguayan Baptist home missionary Juan Valiente coordinated the relief effort. During one day's work Southern Baptist missionary Dr. Tom Kent saw 130 patients. After a worship service 25 people accepted Christ as Savior.

Relief funds are provided by the Evangelical Baptist Convention of Paraguay and the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Wolfe Visits Sunday School Board,
Urges Baptists To Learn To Trust

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptists must put aside philosophical differences, accept diversity that is inevitable in a 13.8-million-member denomination and begin to trust each other again, according to the president of the Southern Baptist Pastors Conference.

Fred Wolfe, pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, Ala., spent Aug. 23-24 in informal dialogue with Sunday School Board personnel. The visit was a follow-up to conversations earlier in the summer between Wolfe and Morton Rose, vice president for church programs and services, about the need for improved communication within the denomination.

Wolfe believes current divisions center primarily in philosophical differences about worship, how to carry out the mission of the local church and what evangelism is--not the Bible. He is confident major differences over the Bible were resolved at the 1981 Southern Baptist Convention in Los Angeles when Herschel Hobbs affirmed that "truth without any mixture of error" in the "Baptist Faith and Message" statement referred to the entire Bible. Hobbs, retired pastor of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, chaired the group which drafted the statement of faith adopted in 1963.

"We didn't vote on the Bible at New Orleans and I'm glad," Wolfe said. "I believe 95 percent of us believe the Bible," he said. "I don't think we have to have the same methods or forms of worship or evangelism. We've got to start trusting each other again. We do have different philosophies and methods, but we always have."

To accommodate diversity, Wolfe said people must have the attitude "you can disagree with me and love the Lord as much as I do." He said he is optimistic Southern Baptist Convention President Jimmy Draper can initiate communication among differing groups. "I don't think people are trying to manipulate and control the denomination," Wolfe said.

For example he said he does not believe Houston Appeals Court Judge Paul Pressler and Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, maneuvered the elections of Adrian Rogers, Bailey Smith or Jimmy Draper as presidents of the convention.

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"I don't believe they (Patterson and Pressler) are as influential as some people think they are. What they did is discover the process of how people get elected and encouraged pastors to start going to the conventions taking their people and expressing their convictions." Until recent years, Wolfe said, "There were a lot of people who felt excluded" from leadership positions in the denomination. "I was one of them. Whether it was true or not, I felt that way." However, he noted, "I don't sense among people of my close association any desire to take control. They just want a voice."

Wolfe said he believes others could benefit from a visit to the Sunday School Board. "Bring people in," he urged several members of the board's administrative staff. "They'll ask some hard questions, but you've got the answers. You have absolutely nothing to hide. You're trying to be objective, fair and to present all sides. I see that."

On Biblical issues about which Southern Baptists differ, such as the Second Coming, Wolfe said he does feel there is a need to "present both points of view just as strongly."

To build bridges of communication, Wolfe said, "Anything we can do we need to do. We need the freedom to express feelings without being labelled a troublemaker. We need to be able to question anything that needs to be questioned as long as we do it constructively and in the right spirit. Anytime we get to the place where we can't question things we're in deep trouble," he said.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Baptist Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press

Fact-Finding Clergy Find
Lebanese Hopeful, Fearful

By Duann Kier

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptists are actively involved in relief efforts in the war-torn Middle East and the Lebanese people are cautiously hopeful about the future.

W. David Lockard, director of organization for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission said, "These are critical days for Lebanon but they can also be a turning point to national strength and identity. The people with whom we talked said the removal of outside forces in Lebanon provides help for a new day of strength and unity in their country." Lockard just returned from a week-long interdenominational fact-finding mission of 11 clergymen sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and sanctioned by both the Israeli and Lebanese governments. According to Lockard the group had complete freedom in talking to individuals and officials throughout Lebanon.

"We talked to people from all walks of life," Lockard said. "Most are hopeful about determining their own destiny and re-establishing their government and its functions. But they are also fearful of the possibility of a fractured Lebanon." There are many small autonomous groups within Lebanon which may have a stronger sense of identity to their own group than to national unity, he added.

"This crisis has long-term ramifications related to race, peace and hunger which are major concerns of the Christian Life Commission," Lockard said. "It is important for all of us, as Southern Baptists and Americans, to develop the best possible understanding of the issues. Just determining 'good guys' and 'bad guys' is a gross oversimplification of the problems."

Lockard said Southern Baptist missionaries and Lebanese Baptists and other Christians are actively involved in relief efforts. Ibrahim Siman, a Baptist pastor in Haifa, is working with injured refugees and their families and is assisted by funds from Baptist churches in Israel as well as relief funds from the Foreign Mission Board.

"Siman coordinated Baptists and other volunteers in turning a Baptist-owned residence into a hostel for rehabilitation," he said. "Families are also being reunited." On the West Bank Lockard said, Southern Baptist physical therapists Jarrell Peach and John Pirkle are providing rehabilitation and an additional therapist is needed.

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"Southern Baptists here at home can provide extra prayer and financial support for our missionaries in the Middle East and the Lebanese Baptists and Christians," Lockard said. Baptists in Lebanon and Israel are consulting to discover additional areas needing relief work."

James Ragland, missionary on furlough from Beirut, told Lockard the time following the end of the Israeli-Palestinian war in Lebanon will be one of tension and civil conflict. "Missionaries have our role to play in easing and ending the conflict," Ragland said. "We believe through our dedication and prayer and through the intercessory prayer of Baptists in America God will mediate to us the grace by which we can achieve peace in this bloodstained and tearstained nation."

Lockard said the Lebanese crisis is emotional and there are legitimate concerns on all sides. "There are no easy answers," he said. "But we can be grateful that our involvement as Southern Baptists is helping provide partial solutions."

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Fisher Urges SBC Educators
To Battle Secular Darkness

By Craig Bird

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--"When the billowing cloud of secularism causes the star of Bethlehem to glow with an ever-diminishing light, this should be for all Christians a clear call to make the light of the gospel shine through the growing darkness," Ben Fisher insists.

Fisher's H.I. Hester Lectures, "The Challenge of Secularism to Christian Higher Education," delivered to the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools earlier this summer, described his evaluation of "secularism as one of the prime challenges of our day and one which 'may' offer the Christian college a badly needed platform on which it may stand."

The former executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Education Commission (1970-1978) thinks problems the secular mindset has created for the presentation of the Christian world view can be answered by Christian colleges. The "critical issue for Southern Baptists at this juncture is the calling out of dedicated men and women with a deep sense of mission to teach in the Christian college," he said.

Appropriate general qualities for such teachers include personal commitment, professional skills and a personal concern for students, he said. In the case of a denominational school, the faculty should include "a substantial majority of teachers from the sponsoring denomination and those teachers from other Christian bodies should be employed only after it has been ascertained that they both understand and are in sympathy with the purpose of the school."

Fisher summed up several factors that have contributed to the dominate position of secular thought in today's educational world. He designated Charles Darwin in biology, Sigmund Freud in psychology, Karl Marx in sociology and John Dewey in American education as the men who have had the greatest influence in Western culture in glorifying secular man and noted that all four reject God as a myth and teach that man's destiny is in his own hands.

The public school system "has become another tremendous influence negating Christian values and belief in the supernatural," he continued, "not so much from open assault (on religion) as from the insidious and persistent" ignoring of religious values from kindergarten through university. "Until after World War II the vast majority of men and women teaching in both public and private schools were professing Christians," Fisher said. But today, "the majority" have no religious preference.

"Thus we are confronted with having those teach our children whose own lifestyle and moral commitment is anti-ethical to our Christian view. I have been and continue to be a supporter of public education but what are those of us to do who do not want our children taught by a pregnant unwed mother, a sexual deviant or one who uses drugs or by his lifestyle encourages promiscuity or belittles religion?"

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The influence of television, in particular Bronowski's "Ascent of Man," Kenneth Clark's "Civilization," John Galbraith's "The Age of Uncertainty" and Carl Sagan's "Cosmos," attracted Fisher's attention because despite "very able and graphic presentation" all of the specials share the idea of "creation without a creator."

He further noted a "gradual, steady estrangement between the theologians and the average Christian sitting in the pew, who today is the bearer of many burdens." Fisher said it is true that all too often theologians find themselves talking only to each other. "How much responsibility should they shoulder for the fact there are many students and laymen-- church members-- who continue to manifest all the outward trappings of church loyalty but who have gnawing and secret doubts, have ceased to pray and have no real belief in eternal life?" he asked.

Despite this "bleak picture indeed" he sees a "new and powerful challenge to Baptist colleges" and suggested steps educators could take "to offer students in our colleges an authentic option: that of Christian hope and a Christian world view."

"Our challenge--the real problem--is to keep young people from drifting with the secular currents and to prepare them for the white waters and the deep gorges through which they must inevitably pass: death, disappointment, tragedy, alienation, betrayal--all the trials which sooner or later await every living person," he said. "We need a year-round coordination and development of the Christian aspects of total campus life. Christian belief is not only intellectually respectable but gives a satisfying and exciting dimension to teaching."

Christian educators also have the opportunity to reconcile the extremes in religious thought, both guilty of aiding secularism by causing distress in the Christian fellowship. "The extreme left has robbed the Scripture of authority; rejected the idea of the supernatural; substituted reason for revelation; reduced Jesus to a great ethical teacher, and destroyed any hope of eternal life," he explained. "In other words God's three great miraculous deeds in history--creation, redemption and consumation--have been secularized.

"On the other hand the extreme fundamentalist has dishonored the rational mind and the imagination God has given us by his literalism, his judgmentalism, his vindictiveness and his many inconsistencies. Although he claims evangelistic spirit and may be unaware of the damage he does he has driven many young people away from the church."

He also called for Christian educators to face the divisive issues: the nature of creation, the inspiration of the Scriptures and Christian morality. He maintained "we have fought Darwin over the wrong issue. We have debated the 'details' of how God created us while Darwin continues to repeat there is no Creator-God." Listing the provable existence of life millions and millions of years ago, "serves to strengthen, not weaken my faith in the greatness of God as Creator," he said.

As for the Scripture, Fisher said, "we have remained silent on the inspiration of the Scriptures so long until even our friends sometimes wonder what we really believe. The fact that God chose to transmit his word through earthen vessels of human mind and personality did not make it one whit less inspired or one whit less authoritative.

"At the present moment we are confronted with what apparently is a growing movement within the Southern Baptist Convention which contradicts Baptist polity and does violence to soul competency. There are those who are advocating that belief in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures should become a test of faith. I think the time has come when we are going to stand up and be counted or remain silent and be counted out."

If Christian educators rise to the challenge and administrators and trustees succeed in "calling out the Christian teacher," Fisher is convinced "changed persons could change the world and 'only' changed persons can change the world.

"So let our goal once again be the student," he concluded. "Let us bend our backs to God's business in Christ, wherein we seek for every student character as well as competence, wisdom as well as knowledge, humility as well as confidence, a world view and eternal hope which lies outside of human reference. Let us testify that those burdens which God does not lift, he gives us the strength to bear; and that every man is my brother and every woman my sister and every human being my responsibility."